

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA – Today the Hampton Roads Congressional delegation – all of whom are members of the Congressional Chinese Drywall Caucus – announced legislation that will prevent hazardous Chinese drywall from being imported into the United States and ensure that existing drywall is properly disposed of so that it does not enter the recycling stream.

Flanked by local residents suffering with the toxic substance in their homes, Representatives Scott Rigell (VA-2); Bobby Scott (VA-3); Randy Forbes (VA-4); and Rob Wittman (VA-1) spoke at a press conference Saturday morning, saying that while their work to hold China accountable for the damages already caused by the toxic product is not done, this bill is a tremendous step toward protecting future homeowners from the devastating physical and financial damage caused by the imported material.

"This is the right step toward preventing this material from coming backin to the United States," Rigell said. "Thousands of American homeowners have suffered from the effects of toxic Chinese drywall. Families have been driven from their homes and faced financial hardship due to the health and home safety concerns this toxic product has created. Some have faced bankruptcy. Many have faced foreclosure. It's time for the government of China to require these manufacturers to submit to the jurisdiction of U.S. courts and make these victims whole."

"I commend Congressman Rigell for introducing this bill to prohibit the importation of this toxic drywall into the United States while also ensuring that what has been imported is disposed of in an environmentally responsible way," said Scott. "Too many families in Hampton Roads have experienced serious health complications and complete financial ruin due to the installation of this hazardous material in their homes. While this is an important step forward in limiting this from happening again, we still have more work to do to hold these foreign manufacturers accountable and make these families whole."

"The conditions as a result of this contaminated drywall are not the fault of the homeowners, many of whom have suffered great hardship as a result of the tainted drywall," said Forbes. "The responsibility and the burden of this rests on the Chinese manufacturers. It is critical that the Secretary of State insist that these companies be held accountable for the effects of their hazardous product – not only for the homeowners affected, but to make clear to the Chinese that product safety issues are simply unacceptable."

"Homeowners affected by toxic drywall have faced catastrophic health problems and financial losses without recourse from those responsible," Wittman said. "Together, we will continue to take every opportunity to urge the President and senior administration officials to pressure the Chinese government to bring their manufacturers to the table and hold them accountable. I'm pleased to join with my colleagues today working to ensure others do not fall victim to toxic drywall."

Contaminated drywall manufactured in China has been discovered in nearly 4,000 homes

across America. The drywall releases toxic gasses into the indoor atmosphere of the homes and has been linked to adverse health conditions and home safety hazards. Many families have consequently moved out of their homes and faced financial hardship as they have tried to avoid foreclosure on a home that is uninhabitable.

Some residents in the Hampton Roads area have been struggling for more than three years, including Colleen Stephens, who has led efforts to bring to light the physical, financial, and emotional hardship caused by the dangerous homebuilding material.

"Unfortunately, to date, the American families that have already had their health, homes, and financial well being-destroyed have not found relief from this disaster," said Stephens.

"Congressman Rigell, in drafting this legislation, gives us hope that at some point our government will stand up for the victims of Chinese drywall. We believe that Congressmen Rigell, Wittman, Scott, and Forbes understand that this is only the first step in the legislative process to assist the families that have already been impacted and to help protect Americans from future toxic imports."

The legislation expresses the sense of Congress that the Secretary of State should insist that the government of China force manufacturers to submit to the jurisdiction of U.S. courts and comply with any decisions issued by the courts for homeowners with contaminated drywall. Further, it declares Chinese-manufactured drywall to be a banned hazardous product in accordance with the Consumer Product Safety Act.

The bill also allows the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) the flexibility to exempt manufacturers that it certifies as producers of non-hazardous drywall; requires the CPSC to promulgate regulations on the disposal of Chinese drywall; and to create a standard test to identify such drywall.

The Chinese Drywall Caucus has been active in seeking justice for the victims of Chinese drywall. The Caucus has asked President Obama's Administration, including the U.S. Trade Representative, to take up the issue on behalf of Americans, and has requested hearings to address ways to alleviate some of the financial burdens on the affected families.

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